

THE UNPREOCCUPIED

(A new Universal Film where John Wayne and Rock Hudson play out-of-work degree holders?)...

Today's new theory is that the jobs you want are out there, they just aren't so difficult to fill that the employers need to bother placing want ads. While seeking some line of gainful employment commensurate with my, ahem, education, or, on the other hand, some line of employment where if I tell them only that I graduated from high school they won't wonder where I was hanging around the last five years, it struck me that most of them are placed by firms in downtown LA and Westwood, none or virtually none by firms in the SF Valley. Odds obviously would favor downtown, but not to the extinction of other areas. So from now on these weary eyeballs will probably track the Valley News and Green Sheet instead of the LA TIMES ("the leading journal of moral revisionism in America" ooh ooh, and goodnight Chief Davis).

GALACTIC
MIND
TRIPLES

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"You know, women are real touchy about rape." -- Jack Nachbar

And would the Founding Father of LASFS be "First in cards, first in puns, and first in the ooks of his fellowfen?"

Stan Burns loaned me his copy of SIGN OF THE UNICORN; I avidly follow the Amber series, which generally has been either downgraded in sf, or passed off as inferior Zelazny. Certainly Burns has tended to lump the series in with Zelazny's bread-and-butter fiction (the Ace novelizations of shorter works that suffered in the padding, particularly). But I think it's time to revise Zelazny's reputation in the genre. In the first place the reader's expectations of Zelazny must be changed: I believe his talent is undiminished, but vast talents have grown up around him. To expect from him some fresh breath of air or pyrotechnic literary display is unfair simply because his works had the effect in relative comparison to other early and mid-60s fiction. Furthermore, if one rereads those famous stories and compares them to current quality work their impact shrinks substantially. Zelazny's historical impact cannot be denied. What is at issue here is the basis on which his newer work should be judged -- against his older work, no better than much now being written despite its initial reception, or against his one-time reputation, a relative standing no longer realistic.

Whether many will care to choose between the points, there's always the preferred alternative of accepting each work on its merits. Should any accuse Zelazny of being in decline, his 1973 novella "'kjjwalll'kje'k'-koothaill'kje'k". And should any downplay the Amber series, dismissing it as an action-adventure potboiler, THE SIGN OF THE UNICORN can stand up to a lot of review. As a novel? Perhaps not: it relies for much of its effect on detail recalled from previous books, which connect here like lost references in a mystery reactivated when some concept suddenly recalls them out of the void. The sf reader who expects and usually gets

beginnings, middles, and ends, here only gets an abrupt middle with a terminal point calculated to create maximum hunger.

What that reader loses in simple form he is repaid in rich philosophical background and stretches of excellent prose styling. The style squandered by the shallowness of an episodic construction in TO DIE IN ITALBAR now works in THE SIGN OF THE UNICORN with as many purposes as a Swiss army knife.

None of the devices previously used are left lingering at the fringes of events but are reintroduced, made integral parts in the novel's development. Shaping Shadow, and the entire epistemology behind the Pattern are no longer playthings of Corwin and relatives of the blood royal; they now are shared talents with the creatures of chaos -- whose own very existence supplies a recognition of mortality the protagonists never before had. Corwin's early realization that his universe is not solipsistic foreshadows the later emergence of some parallel Amber that defies the workings of all his plaything/skills -- a place which may actually prove reality, and the rest another of infinite sham Ambers. The family reflected in the title NINE PRINCES IN AMBER becomes simultaneously more vulnerable and more comprehensible.

Even though it's mostly introductory material, I haven't got that much more to say on the subject...So on to mailing comments....

COMMENTS ON APA L, BEGINNING AT THE 536th DISTY

JUNE MOFFATT: Yes, I am finifinacula, at an end, with Bowling Green.

All work finished, thesis completed, bills paid, contract terminated, corpus delecti removed from premises. // If the "Billy Jack" crowd ever sends me the bike, I'm going to s*e*1*1 it!

MATTHEW TEPPER: I have a review copy of Asimov's BUY JUPITER AND OTHER STORIES; it contains a quantity of stories, of course, but also has some personal and quasi-nonfictional stuff. Inasmuch as you are an Asimov aficiandao, and IF you have the time and inclination, shall I send it to you for review?(Otherwise I am going to keep it myself and dump all over the blatant egotism and inferior fiction contained therein...blackmail? Me?) I'm beginning to drift into the Charlie Brown school of reviewing: if it stinks, don't bother to review it. Or to give that a Certain Ethnic twist, if you want it reviewed, find somebody who might like it.//BHEER received and read. NESFA editorial,ook ook.

TED JOHNSTONE: New York won't collapse as long as it has rapidtransit; but if more people had to use the Brooklyn Queens Expressway (the absolute worst road I was ever on) they'd probably vibrate to death. Driving a covered wagon over a rutted trail couldn't be harder. //Ah, I see you mention the price hike on the Staten Island Ferry. What I could never understand, or find out, though, why would anybody want to go to Staten Island for at any price? (Well, that could be a rhetorical question, but if you have an answer, I'd be interested to hear).

BILL WARREN: I couldn't tell whether your statements on my review of MPATHG were a knock or what; what's to be expected from a drafted-on-stencil review? Though I could always send it to Tom Laughlin...//I liked BANANAS, PLAY IT AGAIN SAM, and TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN. I haven't seen SLEEPER. I'm told Allen doesn't direct PLAY IT AGAIN -- which may account for some of it. LOVE AND DEATH is a very tired old joke: just because it satirizes Russian lit that doesn't make tired Marx Bros. material any funnier, I agree with your comments otherwise.